

CAPITOL STUFF

By JERRY GREENE

Washington, April 7—In all the continuing uproar over CIA subsidies to assorted swatches of students and other amateurs, critics of the intelligence agency have neglected the most important factor in the fuss. This is the question whether the taxpayers got anything of real value from the millions shelled out to the well-traveled beneficiaries.

Friends of the spy agency in Congress have in recent weeks proffered claims that the money was spent in good cause and worth the cost. Perhaps it was, but any sort of solid evidence is lacking.

It would appear that CIA's most horrendous sin was in pouring good money down the drain rather than corrupting the morals of students by slipping them a few bucks for a beer bust in Copenhagen.

It is possible, but only faintly so, that the merits of CIA subsidies may be probed by a house foreign affairs subcommittee under Rep. Dante Fascell (D-Fla.) when he starts a series of CIA hearings shortly.

The Fascell subcommittee is supposed to study in public the report of the Presidential panel which looked into the CIA subsidy program after the student payment exposure and said this sort of business should stop. Since President Johnson agreed with the panel and ordered an end to undercover payments, there is little left for the subcommittee to investigate. But then that never stopped a Congressman with a headline on the horizon.

For the good of national security, it would be well, of course, if the spy agency were tucked out of sight to ply its sneaky trade in proper secrecy and subject to appropriate Congressional review, which it is getting.

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be in the cards. The Fascell subcommittee is getting set for another CIA airing. Only yesterday President Johnson named another of his mountainous committees to review the CIA panel's findings—and figure out some respectable way to dish out the cash to the sacrosanct students.

The Fascell Congressmen have before them an opportunity for genuine service if they could pry a bit and come up with a little documentation on the worth of the aforementioned subsidies.

Admittedly, such proof of merit would be difficult to establish. The Pentagon's favorite cost-effectiveness yardstick can hardly be applied to the success or failure of propaganda or counterpropaganda maneuvers.

But what Fascell could do would be to point up the overwhelming inclination of officialdom to throw taxpayers' money into the breeze simply because they are there—money and breeze. The spotlight wouldn't stop the practice, naturally, but it might curtail the bureaucratic urge momentarily.

Like Drops in Bucket, Wastage Grows

The dubious CIA subsidies are only a fraction of the total wastage which escapes most notice because individual expenditures are relatively small.

Students who picked up a free ride to Europe, courtesy of CIA, in the hope they would make some anti-communist noises and who now yelp that their integrity was besmirched, left behind them campuses saturated with other federal grants—which produced no outcry at all.

Extravagances committed under the guise of research have reached staggering proportions—and put a strong federal rope around the neck of a substantial portion of the professors who cry salty tears over academic freedom when subsidies for others are mentioned.

Apart from direct aid through the Office of Education, the cash outpouring through research contracts and grants is counted in tens of millions.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration stands as a shining example for gaudy expenditures through the colleges and universities; the last semi-annual report showed proposals received from 1,886 universities, nonprofit institutions and private industries for "contracts," and Nasa reported "obligations processed" totaling \$38.5 million.

Nasa had 3,132 student trainees working fulltime toward doctorate degrees at 142 universities in 50 states. Grants awarded included funds for construction of research facilities as well as study.

Funds Free & Easy for World of the Unknown

Nasa from its creation has been a particularly rich field for disbursement of free and easy funds for the simple reason that the agency was, like CIA, a new venture for this government, operating in the world of the unknown. There were, and are, relatively few members of Congress in a position to question whether the U.S. actually needs to know some of the things for which the taxpayers are paying, when it comes to the matter of space exploration.

Hence none dared suggest that Nasa might fail to put a man on the moon in 1970 if the government did not lay out \$80,000 to George Washington University here for "statistical and analytical investigation of the relation between government-financed research and development and resultant inventions and of the special features of the government procurement market and contract provisions that may affect the national economy." The words in quote are, so help us, the official title of the study contract.

Rep. Durward Hall (R-Mo.) is working on a pet peeve of his own, but from all appearances he isn't going to do much better than will Fascell with the CIA. Nobody yet has been able to satisfy Hall on the necessity of an \$8,800 federal grant for research into the history of comic strips. But the National Council of the Arts and Humanities ordered it and you'll be paying for it, by and by.



Rep. Dante Fascell
He'll head CIA hearings